

Write Around Portland Racial Equity Assessment Report Summary July 2018

Organizational Overview

Write Around Portland’s mission is to change lives through the power of writing and was founded on the values of respect, writing, and community. We hold free creative writing workshops in hospitals, prisons, schools, treatment facilities, and social service agencies to bring writing in community to individuals and groups who often have the least access. We also publish anthologies including the writing of workshop participants and hold community readings to amplify under-represented voices in our region. Write Around Portland’s work brings about individual and societal transformation and helps us access our common humanity.

Assessment Process

Starting in December of 2017, a committee of 11 (majority people of color and representing Write Around Portland staff, board, volunteers, interns, participants, and donors) met five times for a total of 10 hours together to complete the *The Tool for Organizational Self-Assessment Related to Racial Equity (The Tool)*. The committee discussed and assessed Write Around Portland’s current organizational position in racial equity by using a series of yes/no questions on the following themes: organizational commitment and leadership, racial equity policies, organizational culture, programming services, participant satisfaction, workshop composition, community collaboration, resource allocation, and data improvements. Based on this self-assessment and discussion, the committee identified strengths, opportunities for growth, and recommendations for next steps for Write Around Portland’s racial equity work and plan.

Strengths (based on the results of *The Tool*)

- Write Around Portland’s core value of respect has been instrumental in creating inclusive, accessible, and respectful spaces throughout the organization. This offers a solid foundation for organizational efforts specifically focused on racial equity.
- Write Around Portland has a history of working with underserved populations and collects demographic information about the racial and ethnic makeup of its board, staff, volunteers, and workshop participants.
- Write Around Portland has implemented a board-approved purchasing statement, which prioritizes working with businesses owned by individuals reflective of the diverse communities we serve (including minority- and women-owned businesses).

Opportunities for Growth (based on the results of *The Tool*)

Recommendations	Reasoning
<i>Develop and implement a racial equity plan with clear actions, timelines, people responsible for each action, indicators of progress and</i>	A detailed plan focused on racial equity will provide direction and accountability to ensure racial equity work continues thoughtfully and intentionally and that it is integrated throughout the organization.

<i>processes for monitoring and evaluation.</i>	
<i>Make a public commitment to racial equity.</i>	A public commitment will be one way to hold us accountable to our racial equity work and explicitly demonstrate this commitment to our community.
<i>Develop a racial equity policy.</i>	An organizational policy solidifies our commitment to racial equity, ensuring that commitment remains a constant in the organization, regardless of changes in leadership or staffing.
<i>Make racial equity and cultural responsiveness training and capacity building more readily available to all staff, leadership, and volunteers.</i>	Given the diverse make-up of Write Around Portland’s constituency and our community, ongoing learning is essential for all staff, board, and volunteers. While staff and board members are currently encouraged to engage in cultural responsiveness training, the committee recommends increasing opportunities for volunteers—as well as staff and board—to continue building their personal and cultural awareness.
<i>Develop and solidify formal partnerships with organizations of color.</i>	Write Around Portland’s community of writers is very diverse, and we recognize there is more to learn in serving the needs of all communities. The committee recommends Write Around Portland builds its relationships with culturally-specific organizations and organizations led by communities of color to ensure we are: informed about our work in these communities, bringing writing workshops to those communities, and recruiting volunteers, board members, and future staff from these communities.

Action Areas

- Develop and implement a racial equity plan with clear actions, timelines, people responsible for each action, budgeting allocations for project needs and staff time, indicators of progress and processes for monitoring and evaluation. The plan should outline actions through 2020, with cues to plan next steps for a subsequent plan beyond 2020.
 1. As part of the racial equity plan, include steps for making a public commitment to racial equity and developing a racial equity policy.
 2. As part of the racial equity plan, include steps for making cultural responsiveness training readily available for staff, board and volunteers.
 3. As part of the racial equity plan, include steps for developing and solidifying authentic partnerships with organizations of color.